

English Language Teaching through the Translation Method at Secondary level Education in Bangladesh

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Abstract: Teaching English to non-natives is always regarded as a difficult task, to which teaching English to Bangladeshi students especially secondary level learners' accountants are no exception. Although English is largely used in Bangladeshi educational systems from primary to advance level, Bangladeshi students have to face difficulties in the world of English. After passing primary education (five years) it is observed that Bangladeshi students can not learn English well. As their field of English knowledge is not well-organized, they have to work hard to improve their English-language skills. Thus, the present paper aims to find out the merits and demerits of the translation method and the suitability of this method in context of Bangladesh for learning English at secondary level education.

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1. Introduction

Bengali is the national language for the country of Bangladesh where it is spoken by about 15 crore people. As the number of students has used English language in and out of their class before 1947 even till today in Bangladesh, the issue of English acquisition among the students has become a vital one. As English was studied in Bangladesh previously, teachers were virtually existent when English began to spread throughout the country after 1971. Before 1971, the study of English was used in all level educational institutions in Bangladesh where a number of English language teaching methods are used like Translation method, Grammar-translation method, Direct method, Audio-lingual method, Humanistic Teaching Approaches, Principled Eclecticism, Task-based teaching and Communicative Language Teaching (CLT). Among the above mentioned methods, translation method is used from the very beginning in Bangladesh especially secondary level education in Bangladesh and made popular day by day.

2. Literature Review

Gasset (1945) defines translation as an "utopian operation." Walter Benjamin (1970) states that a faithful word-for-word translation will not transmit the original sense. Crystal (1998) stated that translators should work to ensure a result that sounds as natural as possible. So, it appears that translation is a creative activity. Schweers (1999) encourages teachers to use the native language in lessons to influence the classroom dynamic, offer a sense of security and authenticate the learners' experiences. The actual usefulness of translation in English classes lies in exploiting it in order to compare grammar,

vocabulary, word order and other language points in English and the student's mother tongue. He conducted a research in this context and found out that a high percentage (88.7%) of the student participants felt that the mother tongue should be used in their English classes. According to Ross (2000), if students are aware of the differences, language interference (transfer) from their own language is likely to be reduced. Why do students use their mother tongue in class? According to Harmer (2001), a principal cause of this (First Language) L1 use is provoked by the activity, i.e. if students are linguistically incapable of activating vocabulary for a chosen task. Another reason is that translation is a natural thing to do in learning a language, and code-switching between L1 and (Second Language) L2 is regarded as naturally developmental. The amount of L1 use by particular students may well have to do with differing learner styles and abilities. "No one is in any doubt that students will use their L1 in class, whatever teachers say or do." Evidence from research into the crucial issue of the L1 use in classrooms around the world is analyzed by Mattioli (2004). For instance, L1 use in the Chinese classrooms offers substantiation that L1 is a precious tool for socio-cognitive processes in language learning. Another reason for L1 use in the classroom relates to the fostering of a positive affective environment. The translation is helpful for L2 acquisition because, firstly, it uses authentic materials, secondly, it is interactive, thirdly, it is learner-centered, and finally it promotes learner autonomy (Mahmoud, 2006). Mehta (2010) has said that translation is a useful tool to learn grammar, syntax, and lexis in both L2 and (Teaching Language) TL. He conducted a research

on “Mongolian Certified Professional Accountants (CPA)” where he shows that a word-for-word back-translation enables Mongolian CPAs to highlight and understand the relationship between the two languages.

As “Translation has a special importance at primary level to advanced level education in Bangladesh, no matter how good the students are at comprehending authentic reading or listening materials, the Bangladeshi students keep mentally prepare translating from L2 into L1 and vice versa. This fact makes teachers of foreign languages conscious of the significance of translation in language classrooms. Regarding the use of L1 in the L2 classroom, it is important to find out how students themselves feel about it.

Definition of Translation

In the one sense of the word, a “translation” is the act of translating from one language to another; in another sense, it is also used to refer to the end result or the finished product which has been translated. Halliday (1970) writes about translation that, “The liberties taken by many so-called translators are seen in their violation of the limits of true translation in distinction from paraphrase. Any technical definition of ‘translation’ must emphasize the meticulous accuracy with which such limits must be observed, especially by scholars who profess to believe in scriptural revelation.” He then also gives definition of the word translation, “A translation should convey as much of the original text in as few words as possible, yet preserve the original atmosphere and emphasis. The translator should strive for the nearest approximation in words, concepts, and cadence. The translator should scrupulously avoid adding words or ideas not demanded by the text. His job is not to expand or to explain, but to translate and preserve the spirit and force of the original... Not just ideas, but words are important; so also is the emphasis indicated by word order in the sentence”

3. Kinds of translation

Halliday (1970) supported Catford’s class distinction of translation in the following way-

1. A Partial Translation is that in which some part or parts of the text are left untranslated.
2. A Restricted Translation is “the replacement of L2 textual material by equivalent TL textual material, at only one level.”
3. In a Phonological Translation L2 phonology is replaced by equivalent TL phonology. Similarly in a Graphological Translation L2 graphology is replaced by equivalent TL graphology, with no replacement, except accidental changes. A graphological

Translation is far removed from the reality of translation proper: it has nothing to do with meaning.

4. A Grammatical Translation is a replacement of L2 grammar by equivalent TS grammar: and a Lexical Translation is a replacement of L2 lexis by equivalent TL lexis.

5. Methods of Translation

There are four basic methods of translation which have been used by those who do the work of translating from the original languages.

1. Literal. This is where the exact words, word order and syntax are as literally followed and translated into English as possible. Although this is an accurate translation, due to word order and syntax it is difficult to read in English. This is best used as tools for those who wish to study the literal English translation along side the original language. And for those who are more concerned with the structure of the original than the structure of English. This would be difficult to use in public readings.

2. Form-Oriented. This is where the actual words are translated and then adjusted slightly in order and syntax to conform to the target language. This method respects the verbal inspiration of the Scriptures. It focuses on the form or the very words of the text and translates them. It is based upon the philosophy that each and every word of the text is important and carries a meaning of its own which is possible to express in another language. This method involves a single process whereby the words are directly translated from the original to the target language. The emphasis is given to translating the words and the various parts of speech as closely as is possible without distorting the meaning. This means that nouns are translated as nouns, verbs as verbs, articles as articles, adverbs as adverbs and adjectives as adjectives. Close attention is given to grammar so that tenses, moods, numbers and persons are translated as closely as possible. This method is sometimes recognized as the word-for-word method of translation. It is the most accurate of all methods of translation in versions which are readily available.

3. Functional Equivalence, Context-Oriented, Idiomatic or Dynamic Equivalence. This method of translation departs from the form-oriented method in two areas: (1) It is concerned with the thought of the writer and (2) The reaction of the translated message by the person reading it. It is based on the underlying theory that communication takes place, not in word form, but in sentence form or that the sentence is the smallest unit of communication. Nida, et al (1974) defended this method of translation in a book entitled “The Theory and Practice of Translation”. In contrasting what they term the “new focus” (Dynamic Equivalence) and the “old focus” (Formal

Equivalence) they write, "The new focus...has shifted from the form of the message to the response of the receptor. Therefore, what one must determine is the response of the receptor to the translated message. The response must then be compared with the way in which the original receptors presumably reacted to the message when it was given in its original setting" (p 1).

In order to achieve this result they go through a three step process which involves: (1) Analyzing what they think the inspired writer meant; (2) Transferring the thought to the target language; and (3) Restructuring it to fit what they think the person reading it will understand (Ibid. p 33). This last step involves a number of subjective judgments and decisions based upon emotions, attitudes and even doctrinal bias. The result is more interpretation than translation.

The fundamental difference between Formal Equivalence and Dynamic Equivalence is that FE is a word-for-word translation while DE is a thought translation which allows the translator's doctrine to determine what he thinks.

4. Paraphrase. This method is hardly worthy of being called a method of translation, since it is not concerned with the words or sometimes not even the meaning of the original. It is so loose that it will allow excess words, whole sentences or even paragraphs to be inserted into the text without any justification other than the paraphraser's belief that he is producing a product. Further, some of them include words and thoughts which are vulgar and disrespectful of the dignity. Such liberties are taken in this method that even liberal scholars do not recognize this as a valid or accurate method of translation. While it is recognized, there is a place for paraphrasing and commenting upon the Scriptures, honesty demands that it is called a commentary or a paraphrase of the Scriptures.

6. Translation in ELT

Translation in ELT is vital if we consider it as a means, not as an end. According to Jumpelt (1984, P.3), "The twentieth century is the age of translation." Crystal (1998) also states that translation is "the neutral term used for all tasks where the meaning of expressions in one language -the source language (SL) is turned into the meaning of another, the target language (TL), whether the medium is spoken, written, or signed."

7. Merits and Demerits of using translation in Teaching of English Language

Merits

According to Howatt (1984) translation is not as terrible as it appears to be and gives reasons for considering translation very advantageous:

1. The influence of the mother tongue is at a higher level. L1 shapes the thinking, and translation helps in better understanding.
2. Translation is a natural and necessary activity that is going on all the time, and that will always be needed.
3. Language competence is a two-way system.
4. The reality of language is another important aspect.
5. Usefulness:
 - a. Invites speculation and discussion.
 - b. Develops qualities that are essential to all language: accuracy, clarity and flexibility.
 - c. The teacher can select material to illustrate particular aspects of language, and students can see the links between language usage and grammar.
 - d. Lets students practice a variety of styles and registers.

Demerits

Newson(1998, PP. 63-67) reveals following limitations:

1. Encourages thinking in one language and transference into another with interference.
2. Deprives from learning within only one language.
3. Gives false credence of word-to-word equivalence.
4. Does not allow achievement of generally accepted teaching aims: emphasis on spoken fluency.
5. Time-consuming activity.
6. Not desirable, since it uses the mother tongue.

8. Grammar Translation Method

Grammar Translation Method was first introduced in Germany especially in Prussia. Hence it was also called Prussian Method. This method is the oldest method of foreign language teaching, having existed for more than 2000 years which dominated European and foreign language teaching from the 1840s to the 1940s and is being modified and used in different countries of the world today. But this method was immigrated for teaching language in Bangladesh during colonial period which is being used till today. It is a very traditional method which does not have any theoretical framework. Richards, et al (1986) state "It is a method for which there is no theory. There is no literature that offers a rationale or justification for it that attempts to relate it to issue in linguistics, psychology, or educational theory". Howatt (1984) depicts in his article that the high priority attached to meticulous students of accuracy which, as well as having an intrinsic moral value, was a prerequisite for passing the increasing number of formal written examinations that grew

up during the century. This method is still common in many countries, even popular. Brown(1994) attempts to explain why the method is still employed by pointing out “It requires few specialized skills on the part of teachers. Tests of grammatical rules and of translations are easy to construct and can be objectively scored. Many standardized tests of foreign languages still do not attempt to tap into communicative abilities, so students have little motivation to go beyond grammar analogies, translations and rote exercises”.

9. The Grammar -Translation Method in ELT

According to Prator, et al (1979), the salient features of the Grammar Translation Method are as follows:

1. Classes are taught in the mother tongue, with little active use of the target language.
2. Much vocabulary is taught in the form of lists of isolated words.
3. Long elaborate explanations of the intricacies of grammar are given.
4. Grammar provides the rules for putting words together, and instruction often focuses on the form and inflection of words.
5. Little attention is paid to the content of texts, which are treated as exercises in grammatical analysis.
6. Often the only drills are exercises in translating disconnected sentences from the target language into the mother tongue.
7. Little or no attention is given to pronunciation.

Larsen (2000) provides some common techniques closely associated with the Grammar Translation Method.

1. Translation of a Literary Passage (Translating target language to native language)
2. Reading Comprehension Questions (Finding information in a passage, making inferences and relating to personal experience)
3. Antonyms/Synonyms (Finding antonyms and synonyms for words or sets of words)
4. Cognates (Learning spelling/sound patterns that correspond between L1 and the target language)
5. Deductive Application of Rule (Understanding grammar rules and their exceptions, then applying them to new examples)
6. Fill-in-the-blanks (Filling in gaps in sentences with new words or items of a particular grammar type)
7. Memorization (Memorizing vocabulary lists, grammatical rules and grammatical paradigms)

8. Use Words in Sentences (Students create sentences to illustrate they know the meaning and use of new words)
9. Composition (Students write about a topic using the target language)

10. Statement of the Problem

The present research was designed to investigate the suitability of translation method at secondary level education in Bangladesh.

11. Objectives of the study

The objectives are as follows-

1. To find out the merits and the demerits of the translation method
2. To evaluate suitability of translation method to English language teaching in context of Bangladesh

12. Significance of the study

This study has great importance for both the teachers and students in general and for secondary level education in particular, as this study has collected a lot of information about translation method, the effectiveness and appropriateness of the method will help the various learners learning second language through translation method transparently. Furthermore, study will guide the English teachers in exploring proper way of translation for teaching. The significance of the study will also be for the planners and education managers in policy formulation or revision of teacher education programs at secondary level in the country. It will also help the teachers gaining perfect idea about translation method especially at secondary level education in Bangladesh.

13. Methodology of this study

As this research is descriptive and non-experimental, the research was based on primary data. For this, the study contained a pilot study and an extensive survey. The author conducted the pilot study to examine the attitudes of the secondary level English teachers towards English Language Teaching through Translation Method. The factors that influenced their choice of teaching through translation method were also explored. Through the pilot study, the teacher questionnaire proved to be effective. Yet more specific questions were added to the teacher questionnaire to be used as an instrument for the main study. The extensive survey of the teachers, where 115 secondary level schools in four districts (Khulna, Satkhira, Bagerhat, Jessore) were conducted to investigate the attitudes of secondary school English teachers in the English Language teaching through translation, which were analyzed both qualitatively and quantitatively. The questionnaires were printed and sent to the respondents by the author. The collected data were put into the computer. Then with the software SPSS

11.0, the author obtained the results of the descriptive analysis.

The study also used a case study approach consisting of qualitative methods of data gathering and analysis. The author observed and took field-notes those secondary level English classes were going on through translation method well. The teacher held translation method in his teaching; the textbook explicitly informed that the translation method of teaching; and there 51 students were presented in the class. In the early stage of the field observation, the 51 students were surveyed with a questionnaire on the basis of their English learning through translation method. All the questionnaires and interviews in the study were originally in English.

14. Data Analysis

Data collected were tabulated, analyzed and interpreted and presented in Figure 1. Percentage was calculated by using statistical technique for analysis. The data obtained were tabulated in term of frequency. The frequencies were converted into scores by assigning the following scale value of each of five responses:

SA =	Strongly Agreed	05 points
A =	Agreed	04 points
UNC =	Uncertain	03 points
DA =	Disagreed	02 points
SDA =	Strongly Disagreed	01 points

Attitudes	Numeric Value	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
SA	5.00	33	24.6	24.6	24.6
A	4.00	76	56.7	56.7	81.3
UNC	3.00	13	9.7	9.7	91.0
DA	2.00	10	7.5	7.5	98.5
SDA	1.00	2	1.5	1.5	100.0
	Total	134	100.0	100.0	

Figure1: Frequency statistics of the teachers' attitudes towards translation

15. Results and discussion

Out of the 35 teachers who participated in the pilot study, 33 of them said they took translation method in their English language teaching (ELT) class. According to the results of the questionnaire in the extensive survey, 81.3 percent of the secondary level English teachers held a positive attitude and perception toward translation, 9.7 percent were uncertain about it, and only 7.5 percent opposed it. And the principles of translation, to their understanding, could be teachers' teaching and

learning experience, principles of that method and its general use, research findings, and the principles summarized by ELT scholars and teachers. Personal teaching and learning experience was believed to be a major source of teaching through this method. About 1.5 percent has strongly disagreed using the method in their teaching.

16. Conclusion

The majority of the secondary level English teachers held positive attitudes and perceptions toward this method in English language teaching. The research showed that the secondary level English teachers are interested using translation method for teaching English language among a number of methods. The field observation demonstrated the real practice of this method in secondary level English teaching. It will help secondary level English teachers to adapt themselves to their classes on the basis of their collective knowledge of English language learning and teaching. On the other, it will also help the teachers to follow this method, so they have to find out for themselves by practical trials. Practically, the survey has shown that this method has been widely accepted and practiced with the secondary level English teachers' awareness of the methodological issues. What is more, the case study has proved this method in ELT in secondary English teaching to be warmly welcomed by the students and fruitful in effect. The underlying principles discovered in the case study were analyzed. The case study has thus revealed that among a number of teaching methods, only the translation method is meaningful for teaching English at the secondary level education in Bangladesh.

17. Recommendations

Though a number of teachers and students were in favor of this method, following recommendations were made for improving the method on the basis of pilot study, questionnaire survey, interview and observation:

1. Teachers should use transparent word or words for this teaching method to involve the students in learning process.
2. Teachers should use the method of teaching in the light of learners need.
3. Common grammatical terms should be used more frequently in this method of teaching by the teachers to make their teaching meaningful.
4. Teachers should pay attention to remove difficult terms of word, double-dealing words, phrases and word to word meaning.
5. Teachers should pay attention to make translation depending on sentences and topics for maintaining the class in a better way.

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